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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE COMMISSION AND ACTION TAKEN CONCERNING THEM

HOUSING, BUILDING AND PHYSICAL PLANNING

This document comprises the recommendations of working parties, committees and ad hoc committees held under the auspices of the Commission and should be read in conjunction with "RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE COMMISSION AND ACTION TAKEN CONCERNING THEM" (E/CN.14/DOC/2/Rev.1.).

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1. The Workshop on Low-cost Housing and Community Facilities within Community Development Programmes in Africa, organized jointly by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and by the United Nations Bureau of Social Affairs, met at the Bourse du Travail in Tunis, 9-22 October 1961.

RECOMMENDATION 1

1 - TECHNICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS OF RURAL AND URBAN LOW-COST HOUSING PROGRAMMES

(1) On planning

Recommend

(a) all public services responsible for housing should co-operate in planning the policy for low-cost and self-help construction programmes;

(b) that such a planned policy should be based upon objective data provided by a research and survey organization which should be responsible for collecting information on both the quantitative and qualitative needs;

(c) that the planning policy should establish the criteria government minimum building standards, methods of financing and management, site selection, population density, community facilities, transport, supply of materials and the use of labour;

(d) that those responsible for this planning policy should promote research and utilization of new local materials adapted to the climatic and economic conditions, especially of materials made from vegetable raw materials (agriculture and forest) and that the use of these materials should be popularized by all suitable means.

Action

(a), (b) and (c): A paper entitled "Housing policy in overall Development Planning (Hou/WP/2/Rev.1) was prepared and circulated to all member States in late 1964.

(d) A paper in three Parts entitled "The building materials industry in Africa, present structure and future growth" (HOU/WP/4, HOU/WP/4/Add.1, HOU/WP/4/Add.2) was prepared and circulated in late 1964.

RECOMMENDATION 2

(2) Training and apprenticeship programme

With a view (i) to reducing the costs of construction, of housing and community facilities

(ii) to promoting the development of efficient construction industries and

(iii) to improving the quality, the design and the planning of housing and community facilities

The Workshop herewith requests the United Nations - through the Economic Commission for Africa - to invite the appropriate international and national organizations to provide in the organization and development of training facilities, training staff, and training programmes in the construction industries.

Such assistance should be designed

(a) to train new personnel through
  (i) vocational training and apprenticeship programme for the principal building trades
  (ii) supervisory training programme, and
  (iii) the establishment of institutions for training, architects, engineers and townplanners

(b) to improve the skills of existing personnel in the construction industries through
  (i) the setting up of refresher courses, and
  (ii) the provision of travelling fellowships.

Action

Two papers entitled "Pilot enquiry into housebuilding costs" (HOU/WP/5) and "Survey on the economics of grouped housing in Africa" (HOU/WP/7/Rev.1/Add.1) were prepared and circulated to Governments of member States in late 1964.

A training course in Aided Self-Help Housing was held for three months from January 1965 in Addis Ababa. The report on this training course (E/CN.14/HOU/8) was issued.

A proposal for Special Fund assistance to establish an Institute for Housing in Algeria for French-speaking countries in Africa was prepared and submitted to the Algerian Government in the second half of 1965.

Investigations were st rted in late 1965 and are still proceeding to establish sub-regional housing centres in the East, West and Central African sub-regions.

(3) On training

Recommend,

(a) that a scheme of national training should be organized at different levels to promote engineers, architects, foremen, skilled workers and building craftsmen;

(b) that, should such training in the case of higher technical officers prove beyond the means of the countries, the creation of international schools in Africa should be considered;

(c) that at the same time the possibility of training self-help advisers and organizing short training courses for those wishing to engage in self-help building should be examined.

Action

Item (3) (a) Additional faculties dealing with the professions of engineers and architects and additional polytechnical schools have been established in different African countries.

(b) Candidates for scholarships and higher technical education are now passed through ECA with a view to this education being obtained in higher technical institutions already established in Africa.

(c) Training courses in Aided Self-Help Housing have been scheduled for early 1967 in the East African sub-region and for early 1968 in the West African sub-region.

(4) Community Development

Recommend:

(a) that community development services should be set up to promote and advise in all the aspects of development and especially in house building;

(b) that the function of these services should be to prepare the ground for technicians and be closely co-ordinated with the functions of the technical services;

(c) that the Government should encourage to a large extent through technical and financial aid and legislation all forms of individual effort in building and self-help housing.

Action

There has been collaboration between Housing and Social Research Sections in ECA on the subject of Aided Self-Help Housing. In addition, a Working Group of Experts to deal with urbanization in relation to industrialization is scheduled for 1967.

(5) On financing

Recommend:

(a) that the problem of low-cost housing programmes financing should be seriously considered by the Economic Commission for Africa, by the Economic and Social Council, and more generally by the United Nations;

(b) that concrete solutions should be sought either by the creation of an inter-African common fund designed to support low-cost housing programmes, or within the framework of long-term loans at low interest rates, by international credit organization;

(c) that the Governments should seek credit formulas adapted to Africa.

Action

(a) A paper entitled "Preliminary remarks on the financing of housing in Africa (HOU/WP/6) was prepared and circulated to Governments of member States in late 1964.

(b) Investigations are taking place on a proposal to establish a common fund designed to support low cost housing programmes in Africa. These investigations will include collaboration with the African Development Bank.

(6) On utilization of surplus labour in workers housing

Invites the Economic Commission for Africa to request the International Labour Organization:

(a) to examine the possibilities of developing specially designed government programmes to increase the construction of workers' housing and at the same time to reduce unemployment through the employment of surplus labour, who would be paid at rates lower than those prevailing in the building industry; and

(b) to make recommendations which would insure the maximum use of surplus labour in the construction of workers' housing.

Action

(a) and (b) A study on the construction industry in the West African sub-region has been made and is being circulated to member States for the West African sub-regional meeting in Niamey in October 1966. Lack of resources have prevented action on the specific recommendations made in (a) and (b).

(7) On international technical assistance for low-cost housing programmes

Recommends:

(a) that in the long-term international technical assistance programmes, sub-regional technological research centres should be set up and also training and refresher courses should be organized;

(b) that ECA should include in its programme of activities:

(i) for 1964 another workshop to consider the progress made in housing policies

(ii) general and detailed studies of the problems raised by the present workshop

(iii) travel and study scholarship for African specialists to increase their knowledge of low-cost housing

(iv) the organization of a centre for the exchange of technical information and documentation

(v) the organization in co-operation with other inter-governmental or governmental institutions of exhibitions showing progress in African housing

Action

(b) (i)

A Seminar on the Physical Planning Aspects of Urbanization was held at Accra from 28 September - 5 October 1964 (Report E/CN.14/HOU/5).

(b) (v)

An exhibition on Housing in Africa was held at Africa Hall, Addis Ababa during the First Session of the Committee on Housing on Physical Planning, November - December 1964.

(c) a large part of the programme of the standing committee of community development and social services, created at the [illegible] is devoted to low-cost housing programmes.

Action

(c) There has been increased collaboration between the Social Research and Housing Sections in the matter of low-cost housing and aided self-help housing programmes.

(8) Role of Inter-governmental organizations and agencies

Calls upon the United Nations to invite through the Economic Commission for Africa the appropriate International Agencies and Intergovernmental organizations to continue to contribute, on a regional basis, to solving housing problems in general and low-cost housing problems in particular.

Such contribution could take the shape of:

(1) Efficient financial assistance, and particularly loans on long-term basis and convenient rate of interest.

(2) Technical assistance by means of providing needy countries experts and technical equipment and by the organization of periodic technical meetings in order to exchange views, experience and information between countries of one region.

(3) Establishing a sort of regional or international institute to deal with needed researches in the field of technicology as regards housing.

Action

(1) United Nations pilot projects in housing have been established in Ethiopia, Somalia and Guinea.

(2) In addition to the pilot projects above, there was in March 1966 a total of 23 experts in housing working in 12 different African countries.

(3) It has already been reported above that proposals are being made to establish sub-regional housing centres in the North, East, West and Central African sub-regions.

(9) Contacts and exchange of information

Recommends

that the Governments should promote contacts and exchange of information between technicians and housing experts from different countries, and more particularly from the countries with similar climatic conditions.

Action

Visits in East and West Africa by the Special Consultant in Research, Documentation and Training in housing to encourage promotion of contacts and exchange of technical information were carried out in 1964/65.

(10) Low-Cost Housing and Social Aspects

1. The Government should make some investigations in the social and cultural background of the group of citizens as well as the type of traditional houses they live in before (planning and designing at an average level) formulating their overall plans.

2. Provisions of the following essential services should be embodied in the plan and made available as soon as people have moved into the new area: School, Clinic, Market, Shops, Post Office and Community Centres. Churches and Mosques can be built through voluntary efforts if the land is earmarked for this purpose.

3. The Community Centre should be run by the inhabitants of the area with the assistance of the Home Economic Workers or Social Welfare Workers if the aim of the Government is to raise the standard of living of that community.

4. The Government should also bear in mind that the provisions of these activities is saving in the long run, because the high rate of infant mortality will be reduced, the health efficiency of workers will be improved and the security of the families will contribute towards the upbringing of better generations which is the aim of any good Government.

5. Transport should be available for the inhabitants of the Community involved in the housing project to avoid overcrowding during the working days in urban areas. Lack of transport is a major problem which has to be solved as urgently as Low-Cost Housing for the lower income group, under economic planning.

6. Legal measures should be made for the maintenance of the houses in order to avoid the creation of slums.

Action

10 (2) A Workshop on Urbanization in Africa held in Addis Ababa from 26 April - 5 May 1962 (Report E/CN.14/117).

The Seminar on the physical planning aspects of urbanization was held in Accra from 28 September - 5 October 1964 (Report E/CN.14/HOU/5).

A Working Group of Experts to deal with urbanization in relation to industrialization has been scheduled for 1967.

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF EXPERTS ON
HOUSING PROBLEMS IN AFRICA
(Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 9-17 January 1963)

1. The first Meeting of Experts on Housing Problems in Africa met in Addis Ababa from 9-17 January 1963 to consider housing problems and policies. The Meeting has its origin in resolution 53(IV) adopted by the fourth session of the Economic Commission for Africa at its 75th plenary meeting on 1 March 1962.

2. The Commission, recognizing the fundamental importance of better housing in Africa, requested the Executive Secretary to convene a conference of experts for the purpose of:

(a) Exchange views on the present housing situation and the action so far taken on it;
(b) Defining as clearly as possible housing problems, their scope, and the requirements for their solution;
(c) Suggesting the general measures to be taken, with special reference to the national administrative bodies most useful and fit to facilitate the framing and implementation of housing policies;
(d) Proposing to the Commission the organizational arrangements most suitable to ensure that housing problems shall be regularly and continuously studied within the Commission.

Action

The Sixth Session of the Commission was held in Addis Ababa from 19 February - 3 March 1964,(Report No. E/CN.14/290).

The Seventh Session of the Commission was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 9 - 23 February 1965 (Report E/CN.14/343/Rev.1).

General Recommendations

86 The Meeting recommended that:

(a) the secretariat should centralize and disseminate among member countries information on housing, building and physical planning

problems, with particular reference to the results and the application of research, exchange of experience on all the subjects listed in the outline of its long-term programme of work and in general on all matters within its terms of reference;

(b) The secretariat should circulate information available on aided self-help projects in Africa, and in particular ensure the widest possible circulation of the report prepared on this subject by a United Nations Technical Assistance expert; the secretariat should also include the subject of aided self-help on the agenda of the first meeting of the proposed committee on housing and physical planning;

(c) The ECA should encourage the establishment of regional or sub-regional centres on housing and building research and documentation in Africa; the secretariat should in particular and within its competence facilitate the co-ordination and dissemination of published information on housing and building research, in close co-operation with the CIB and its African member institutes;

(d) ECA should convene a meeting to consider physical planning in relation to the specific problems of rapidly developing African countries with a view to establishing on a firmer basis a programme for physical planning in Africa as a whole;

(e) ECA, within the framework of comprehensive studies of the economic geography of African countries, should carry out or sponsor such surveys as will be necessary to permit the elaboration and the implementation of national and regional physical plan;

(f) The secretariat should collaborate with the relevant international organizations in collecting and circulating suitable material and assist in the training of families (particularly housewives), concerning the maintenance and rational use of the house and its facilities.

Action

(a) A total of 17 papers on different aspects of housing, building and physical planning has been prepared and circulated since October 1964.

(b) The United Nations publication "Manual on Self-Help Housing" (ST/SOA/53) 1964 has been circulated. A paper entitled "Progress Report on Contribution of Aided Self-Help Housing Programme in Africa" (HOU/WP/12) was prepared and circulated in early 1965. This has been followed up by visits of the regional adviser in co-operatives and in self-help housing. The subject has been included in the work programme of the section.

(c) Investigations are going on to establish sub-regional housing centres but there is a lack of resources to deal with this aspect adequately.

(d) and (e) The Seminar on the physical planning aspects of urbanization was held in Accra from 28 September - 5 October 1964 (Report E/CN.14/HOU/5).

(f) There has been collaboration between the Social Research and Housing sections.

Report of the Workshop on the Role of Physical Planning and Urbanization Policies in Development

(Accra, 28 September - 5 October 1964)

Origin: Recommendations of the Workshop on Urbanization in Africa (E/CN.14/170).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Urbanization and population trends

1. A study of criteria presently used in defining towns for the purpose of introducing comparable standards in the assessment of urbanization trends should be undertaken in collaboration with institutions for higher education and research in Africa.

2. A study should be undertaken of the growth of initial and running costs of urban structure and services in relation to population sizes. This study should be initiated by the ECA secretariat in collaboration with African and other research institutes.

3. The scope of the current study on methodology of housing needs which is already part of the ECA work programme should be expanded to include methods of assessment of requirements in essential public and social services.

Action

(A) Seminar on the physical planning aspects of urbanization was held in Accra from 28 September - 5 October 1964 (Report E/CN.14/HOU/5). Two papers have been prepared and circulated on a technical basis on initial and running costs of water supply for housing and the use of stabilization ponds for sewage disposal respectively.

A paper entitled 'Survey on Housing Needs' (HOU/WP/9) has been circulated.

B. The Role of Physical Planning

1. A study should be undertaken on the structure of the organizations responsible for physical planning, on their degree of centralization and on their relationship to economic planning and national policy makings. The study should be carried out by the ECA secretariat which, in the first stage, would collect and analyse information from member Governments. In the second stage, a panel of experts should be designated to elaborate proposals for suitable patterns of organizations of increasing magnitude to assist Governments in establishing adequate and properly co-ordinated physical planning services.

Action

(B) Due to lack of resources, a study has yet to be undertaken on the structure of the organizations responsible for physical planning.

C. Physical Planning Methodology

A study should be carried out by the United Nations, in co-operation with FAO, on methods of identifying areas of different rural economies and cultures within the framework of physical planning for use in development programmes. This study should later be integrated into research programmes on physical planning techniques.

Action

(C) Due to lack of resources, a study has yet to be carried out on physical planning methodology.

D. Education

It is recommended that a realistic assessment of immediate and long-term staff needs be prepared by ECA in collaboration with member Governments as a matter of urgency, as a preliminary to determining the educational facilities that will be needed to meet requirements in the next two decades. Proposals resulting from this study for the establishment of new and the expansion of existing facilities, on a national and international basis, and

recommendations on the content of the courses, should be submitted to Governments concerned for their consideration and action.

Action

(D) Due to lack of resources a study has yet to be carried out on an assessment of immediate and long-term staff needs for education.

B. Legislation

The United Nations and the ECA should ensure that experts in the field of physical planning and associated professions provided to member countries, should be briefed to advise the Governments to which they are accredited of the urgent necessity of ensuring that, when appropriate, fresh legislation should be drafted so that the entire process of physical planning and development from national to local level may go forward with the full authority of the law. Physical planning organizations are advised to similarly bring this matter before their Governments.

Action

(E) Seminar on the physical planning aspects of urbanization was held in Accra from 28 September - 5 October 1964 (E/CN.14/HOU/5). Ghana has by administrative arrangements integrated physical planning with economic planning at the national level. Liberia has drafted legislation for the same purpose.

ANNEX III

SUGGESTIONS FOR A LONG-TERM PROGRAMME OF WORK BY ECA ON HOUSING, BUILDING AND PHYSICAL PLANNING

The Meeting recommended that a committee on housing and physical planning should be established within ECA, with the following terms of reference and programme of work:

A. Terms of Reference

1. The committee on housing and physical planning, acting within the broad framework of policies and subject to the general supervision of the Commission, shall:

(a) Initiate and participate in measures for facilitating concerted action for the improvement of the housing situation, raising the standard of related community facilities, and increasing the efficiency of the building industry;

(b) Explore and promote various forms of international financial assistance in the field of housing and physical planning;

(c) Make or sponsor investigations, studies and consultations relating to housing, building and physical planning as the Committee deems appropriate;

(d) Undertake and sponsor the collection, evaluation and dissemination of data and information concerning the economic, social and technical aspects of housing, building and physical planning;

(e) Provide a form for discussion and the exchange of information and experience on any matters arising from items enumerated under (a) to (c) above.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT ON THE FIRST SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND PHYSICAL PLANNING

1. The first session of the Committee on Housing and Physical Planning of the Economic Commission for Africa was held in Addis Ababa from 23 November to 2 December 1964. The meeting was convened by the Executive Secretary according to para. 259 of the report of the Economic Commission for Africa on its fifth session (E/CN.14/229/Rev.1).

...

10. Before the adoption of the agenda, the Head of the Uganda delegation raised the question of the participation of the representative of Rhodesia in the work of the Committee. He proposed that a resolution be adopted requesting that representative to abstain from attending subsequent meetings of the Committee.

11. Before a formal decision was taken on the question, the Committee was able, in the absence of the representative of Rhodesia, to adopt its agenda, which is reproduced in Annex III of the present report. Under the same conditions, the Committee was able to discuss items 4, 5 and 6 of the agenda.

12. In the afternoon of Friday, 27 November, the representative of Rhodesia having resumed his seat, the text of the draft resolution was submitted to the Committee; the resolution, which appears in Annex IV of the present report, was adopted unanimously, with one abstention. In implementation of the resolution, the Chairman asked the representative of Rhodesia to leave. The latter having refused, the other delegations withdrew. The Chairman was therefore compelled to note that it was impossible to continue the work of the Committee.

13. Consequently, the secretariat took it upon itself to present a summary report dealing with the discussions that the Committee had had before dispersing. The report in question appears in Annex V to the present report.

PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND PHYSICAL PLANNING OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM RHODESIA

Resolutions adopted by the Standing Committee

Mindful of paragraph 7 of the revised terms of reference, and the rules of procedure of the Economic Commission for Africa,

Considering that the representative from Rhodesia is sent by a minority Government totally unacceptable to the African States,

Convinced that the presence of the minority Government's representative is not conducive to the Committee working in a happy atmosphere,

Deeming that this representative's presence is against the interests of the members of the Committee, for whose future progress the present deliberations are intended,

1. Requests the Chairman to ask the representative from Rhodesia to withdraw forthwith and not to take part in any of the subsequent Committee meetings;

2. Requests the delegates present to urge their respective Governments to take the necessary measures to deprive Rhodesia of its associate membership of the Economic Commission for Africa.

Action

Since November 1964, Rhodesia has not participated in any meeting in which housing and its related subject, the building materials and construction industry, have been dealt with.